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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 OMB-01 TRSE-00 EB-07
/094 W
----------021957Z 041313 /70
R 021744Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6257
INFO AMCONSUL BELIZE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY MEXICO
AMEMBASSY PANAMA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
USMISSION USUN NY
USCINCSOUTH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 GUATEMALA 3480

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, PFOR, GT, UK, BH
SUBJ: BELIZE DISPUTE

REF: GUATEMALA 3465

SUMMARY. NEXT UK-GUATEMALA-BELIZE NEGOTIATING SESSION WILL BE JULY 6-7 IN WASHINGTON. GUATEMALAN FONMIN SAYS MEETING IS CRITICAL AND GUATEMALAN ARMY GROWING RESTLESS. MEXICAN INTEREST IN WHAT HAPPENS TO BELIZE REMAINS A PROBLEM AND GOG WILL SEEK TO DISCUSS IT WITH MEXICO SOON. GUATEMALA WILL NOT RAISE DISPUTE AT OASGA BUT BELIEVES CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES MAY DO SO. GOG IS WORRIED ABOUT POSSIBLE PANAMA-CUBA COOPERATION ON BELIZE. END SUMMARY
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1. AMBASSADOR CALLED ON FOREIGN MINISTER MOLINA JUNE 1 PREPARATORY TO HIS DEPARTURE FOR CONSULTATIONS IN DEPARTMENT, AND TO INTRODUCE DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY ARRELLANO AND CEN DIRECTOR WADE MATTHEWS. CONVERSATION DEALT PRIMARILY WITH BELIZE.

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2. MOLINA SAID NEXT FORMAL NEGOTIATING SESSION WITH UK WOULD BE IN WASHINGTON JULY 6 AND 7. GOG AND HMG HAD AGREED MAKE SIMULTANEOUS PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT, BUT WHEN MOLINA BRIEFED PRESIDENT LAUGERUD HE HAD NEGLECTED TELL HIM TIME AND PLACE WERE STILL CONFIDENTIAL. PRESIDENT PROMPTLY ANNOUNCED THE MEETING AT A PRESS CONFERENCE (REFTEL). (BRITISH CONSUL TOLD US LATER MOLINA HAD APOLOGIZED TO HIM AND TAKEN FULL BLAME.)

3. MOLINA SAID WASHINGTON MEETING WOULD BE CRITICAL. GUATE-MALAN ARMY FEELS OBLIGED TO DEFEND SOVEREIGNTY AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF GUATEMALA. IF NEGOTIATORS DON'T RETURN FROM WASHINGTON WITH SOME PROSPECT OF A SOLUTION, ARMY WILL FEEL IT HAS TO FIGHT. THIS IS NOT A LOGICAL POSITION, MOLINA SAID, BECAUSE FIGHTING THE BRITISH WOULD BE SUICIDE. BUT LOGIC DOES NOT GOVERN THIS ISSUE. ASKED IF A SETTLEMENT INVOLVING ONLY PARTIAL TERRITORIAL CESSION WOULD POSE CONSTITUTIONAL PROBLEM FOR GUATEMALA, MOLINA SAID IT WOULD, BUT GOG THINKS IT CAN MANAGE THE PROBLEM, I.E., WIN PUBLIC AND CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR THE SETTLEMENT, IF THE CESSION IS LARGE ENOUGH. MATTHEWS ASKED IF THERE WERE ANY POSSIBILITY UNDER GUATEMALAN CONSTITUTION OF INCORPORATING BELIZE INTO A FUTURE UNITED PRO-VINCES OF CENTRAL AMERICA. MOLINA SAID THAT WAS A VERY WELCOME IDEA. BELIZE WOULD CERTAINLY BE WELCOMED IN CENTRAL AMERICAN COMMON MARKET AND ANY FUTURE POLITICAL INTEGRATION OF THE REGION. BELIZE KEEPS TALKING ABOUT ITS LINKS WITH THE CARIBBEAN WHICH IN MOLINA'S VIEW ARE VERY TENUOUS. BELIZE PRODUCES ONLY PRODUCTS WHICH COMPETE WITH CARIBBEAN EXPORTS AND IMPORTS NOTHING FROM CARIBBEAN. THEY DO IMPORT FROM GUATEMALA AND MANY BELIZEANS ARE EMPLOYED IN GUATEMALA.
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THE DRAFT UK-GUATEMALA TREATY PROVIDES FOR JOINT DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN BELIZE AND GOG IS MOST WILLING TO COOPERATE IN SUCH PROJECTS.

4. ARRELLANO ASKED WHAT THE MEXICAN REACTION MIGHT BE TO A CESSION OF PART OF SOUTHERN BELIZE TO GUATEMALA. MOLINA SAID MEXICO HAD SAID IT FAVORS SELF-DETERMINATION FOR BELIZE BUT THAT IF STATUS OF BELIZE SHOULD CHANGE MEXICO WOULD FEEL FREE TO REASSERT ITS CLAIM TO NORTHERN BELIZE. MOLINA SUPPOSED THAT MEXICO HAD IN MIND POSSIBILITY OF GUATEMALA'S RECOVERING ALL OF BELIZE INCLUDING THE AREA IN WHICH MEXICO IS INTERESTED, BUT GUATEMALA KNOWS THAT IS NOT PRACTICAL. IN ANY EVENT MEXICO HAS NO GROUNDS FOR CLAIM; THEY SIGNED A TREATY WITH UK IN 19TH CENTURY GIVING UP ALL CLAIM TO NORTHERN BELIZE. THAT'S WHY MEXICANS SAY THEY WILL REASSERT CLAIM ONLY IF STATUS CHANGES, I.E., UK LEAVES THE SCENE. MOLINA SAID GOG HAD NEVER DISCUSSED WITH MEXICO THE POSSI-BILITY OF A COMPROMISE SETTLEMENT OF THE GUATEMALAN CLAIM, BUT IT INTENDED TO DO SO IN THE NEAR FUTURE. ARELLANO ASKED

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WHAT GOG WOULD DO IF MEXICO INSISTED ON ASSERTING ITS
CLAIM TO A SHARE OF BELIZE. MOLINA SAID HE WOULD EXPLAIN
THE ESSENTIALITY OF A COMPROMISE FOR THE FUTURE PEACE AND
DEVELOPMENT OF THE AREA, AND THE DIFFICULTY GUATEMALA HAD IN
ACCEPTING ANYTHING SHORT OF ALL OF BELIZE. THE POSSIBILITY OF
GUATEMALA ACCEPTING ONLY A SMALL CESSION HAD NEVER BEEN
PRESENTED TO GOM AND MOLINA THOUGHT IT SHOULD BE, SO MEXICO
WOULD KNOW GUATEMALAN POSITION HAD CHANGED.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 GUATEMALA 3480

5. MATTHEWS ASKED WHETHER BELIZE DISPUTE WOULD COME UP AT
OASGA. MOLINA SAID GUATEMALA CERTAINLY WILL NOT RAISE IT,
BUT HE WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED IF SOME OF THE CARIBBEAN
COUNTRIES DID. IF SO GUATEMALA WOULD HAVE TO DEFEND ITS
POSITION. GUATEMALA WOULD ARGUE THAT ITS DISPUTE IS WITH
A EUROPEAN COUNTRY NOT A MEMBER OF OAS AND THEREFORE OAS
NOT PROPER FORUM FOR DISCUSSION OF PROBLEM. BUT SOMEONE,
PERHAPS PANAMA, MAY NEVERTHELESS PUSH FOR A RESOLUTION.

6. ASKED WHETHER GOG SAW ANY ROLE OAS SECRETARY GENERAL
ORFILA MIGHT USEFULLY PLAY ON THIS ISSUE, MOLINA SAID YES

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OF COURSE. AS WE KNEW (SEE GUATEMALA 1341) ORFILA HAD GONE
TO LONDON AND HAD TRIED TO EXPLAIN GUATEMALA'S POSITION, THAT
GUATEMALA WAS SERIOUS IN REALLY WANTING A SETTLEMENT, THAT
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IT WAS NOT INTERESTED IN PERPETUATING THE DISPUTE. BUT WHEN
ORFILA CAME BACK FROM LONDON HE WAS NOT VERY OPTIMISTIC.
AMBASSADOR SAID THAT HE HAD UNDERSTOOD THAT GOG HAD NO
OBJECTION TO ROLE FOR ORFILA IF THERE WERE ANY WAY HE COULD
HELP. MONILA SAID THAT'S CORRECT. FURTHERMORE, WHEN HE HAD
TALKED WITH SECRETARY VANCE IN MARCH, HE HAD TOLD HIM GOG
WOULD WELCOME ANY ASSISTANCE US COULD GIVE. US HAD BEEN
VERY HELPFUL ON THIS ISSUE IN THE PAST.

7. MOLINA RIASED PROBLEM OF GUATEMALA'S STRAINED RELATIONS
WITH PANAMA. GOG WAS SORRY TO BREAK RELATIONS BUT IT HAD
NO CHOICE. GUATEMALA HAS BEEN TRYING SINCE INDEPENDENCE FROM
SPAIN TO ATTRACT PANAMA INTO CENTRAL AMERICA. IT HAD
ALWAYS SUPPORTED PANAMA ON CANAL ISSUE. SO PANAMA HAD
NOTHING TO REPROACH GUATEMALA FOR, BUT SUDDENLY IT ADOPTED
POSITION ON BELIZE GUATEMALA CONSIDERS OFFENSIVE. PANAMANIAN
MINISTER TALKED THE OTHER DAY ABOUT SENDING TROOPS TO BELIZE,
AND THEN QUOTE CHANGED HIS POSITION END QUOTE AND SAID
HE HAD MEANT ONLY THAT PANAMA WOULD SEND TROOPS AS PART OF
A UN FORCE IF ASKED TO DO SO. GUATEMALA HAS LONG BEEN
CONCERNED ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF CASTRO'S USING BELIZE DISPUTE
AS PRETEXT FOR INTERVENING IN BELIZE, EVEN OF SENDING CUBAN
TROOPS. GOG KNOWS UK WOULD NOT PERMIT THAT AS LONG AS IT
IS THERE, BUT UK HAS SAID MANY TIMES THAT AS SOON AS BELIZE
IS INDEPENDENT IT WILL WITHDRAW ITS TROOPS. THAT WILL
CREATE A VACUUM AND FOR MANY REASONS CUBA WILL WANT TO FILL
IT. NOW GOG IS CONCERNED THAT THIS CUBAN INTEREST IS RELATED
IN SOME WAY TO PANAMA'S SUDDEN CHANGE IN POSITION AND GOP'S
STATEMENTS ABOUT TROOPS.

8. COMMENT: WE BELIEVE MOLINA IS GENUINELY CONCERNED
ABOUT GROWING IMPATIENCE AMONG GUATEMALAN MILITARY OVER
LACK OF PROGRESS IN BELIZE NEGOTIATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES OF
A STALEMATE AT THE JULY 6-7 MEETING. THIS IS FAR FROM SAYING,
HOWEVER, THAT BREAKDOWN OF TALKS WOULD LEAD TO IMMEDIATE
CONFLICT. ON THE CONTRARY, WE BELIEV FOCUS OF BOTH PARTIES
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TO THE DISPUTE WOULD THEN SHIFT TO UNGA IN SEPTEMBER, AND
GOG'S CONSIDERATION OF NEXT STEPS IN ITS BELIZE POLICY WOULD
AWAIT OUTCOME OF UNGA ACTION.

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